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BACKGROUNDER 1-0037
WILLIAM WADE/LONDON

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EUROPE ON SALT

ANNCR:

THE LATEST ROUND OF SOVIET-AMERICAN STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATIONS TALKS IS BEING FOLLOWED WITH CAREFUL INTEREST IN WESTERN EUROPE. FROM LONDON VOA CORRESPONDENT WILLIAM WADE SUMS UP SOME OF THE REACTION:

VOICE:

A COMMENTATOR IN BRITAIN'S GUARDIAN NOTES THAT THE CRUISE MISSILE, ONE ISSUE AT THE MOSCOW TALKS, IS A DIRECT DESCENDANN OF THE VEE-ONE, OR "DOODLEBUG," THE UNMANNED FLYING BOMB THAT HIT LONDON IN WORLD WAR TWO. THE MODERN NUCLEAR-TIPPED CRUISE MISSILE -- SAYS THE GUARDIAN -- HAS "DEEPLY CONFUSED THE CRUDE STRATEGIC ARITHMETIC" OF THE SOVIET AMERICAN ARMS TALKS.

WESTERN EUROPEANS ARE ENCOURAGED BY PROGRESS IN INCLUDING BOTH CRUISE MISSILES AND SOVIET BACKFIRE BOMBERS IN STRATEGIC EQUATIONS AT MOSCOW. BUT NOT ALL ARE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE CURRENT ARMS BALANCE. HERE IN BRITAIN, OPPOSITION LEADER MARGARET THATCHER HAS JUST DRAWN A STRONG SOVIET ATTACK -- A MOSCOW NEWSPAPER CALLS HER "AN IRON LADY"-- FOR HER CRITICISM OF THE RUSSIAN ARMS BUILDUP.

IN FRANCE, THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES ITS INDEPENDENT POLICY OF NUCLEAR ARMS, ORIGINATED BY PRESIDENT DEGAULLE. OVER THE WEEKEND FRENCH NUCLEAR SUBMARINES TOOK THEIR FIRST DELIVERY OF MISSILES WITH HYDROGEN-BOMB WARHEADS. THE FRENCH NEWSPAPER LE MONDE, MEANWHILE, REFLECTED A RELATIVELY GLOOMY VIEW OF U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER'S MOSCOW

TALKS WITH SOVIET LEADERS. LOWERING LIMITS ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS, LE MONDE SAYS, IS PROMISING IN THAT IT AVOIDS WORSENING THE EXISTING SITUATION AND CREATING AN ANARCHY OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION. BUT, THE NEWSPAPER ADDS, THE MOSCOW RESULTS ARE ALSO DERISORY BECAUSE IN ANY CASE THE TWO SUPERPOWERS ALREADY HAVE WARHEADS SUFFICIENT TO BLOW UP THE PLANET.

BRITAIN'S FINANCIAL TIMES FAVORS DEFERRING A NEW SALT AGREEMENT. REVIEWING SALT ONE RESULTS, IT SAYS IT IS STRIKING HOW THE SOVIET UNION, WITHOUT ACTUALLY VIOLATING THE AGREEMENT HAS INCREASED THE SIZE AND YIELD OF ITS MISSILES TO SURPASS THOSE OF THE UNITED STATES. THIS, ALONG WITH A GENERAL SOVIET MILITARY BUILDUP, THE FINANCIAL TIMES SAYS, HAS CHANGED THE BALANCE IN MOSCOW'S FAVOR. TECHNOLOGY, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF CRUISE MISSILES, IS THE ONE AREA WHERE THE UNITED STATES HOLDS THE LEAD. AND THE FINANCIAL TIMES SAYS ANY LIMITATIONS ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF CRUISE MISSILES OUGHT TO "REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE COUNTER CONCESSIONS" SHOWING THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS "SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN ARMS CONTROL."

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